



Maryland State Archives

COVID-19 Return to Work Action Plan

June 8, 2020

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Introduction

At the Maryland State Archives (MSA), it is our priority to keep our employees and their families healthy, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, we will abide by governmental guidelines when possible as we strive to balance public health concerns with the needs of our agency and the patrons we serve. This return to work action plan details how we plan to reopen our facilities and still keep all of our employees safe to every extent possible. This plan, which pulls from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance, highlights the responsibilities of managers and employees, and outlines the steps MSA is taking to address COVID-19.

This plan highlights workplace protocols in place to protect your safety and establish a level of comfort for all of our employees as we ask you to return to the office. While we will implement various protocols to ensure your safety, it's up to you and your co-workers to execute on these protocols daily.

We understand that every employee's situation is different and encourage those with specific risks or concerns to reach out to their manager or the Fair Practices Officer to discuss alternate arrangements, should they be necessary.

Return to Work Timeline

Due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating an exact timeline for resuming "normal" operations is not feasible. MSA will continue to monitor applicable state and local guidance and determine next steps for opening the office to more staff, and eventually to the public.

At this time, we've created a tentative phased approach for asking our employees to return to work. To remain consistent with guidance from Governor Hogan, our phased approach to reopening our office mirrors the guidelines included in [Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery](#). The "Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery" has been developed based on the recovery plans issued by the [federal government](#), the [National Governors Association](#), and premier institutions like [Johns Hopkins](#) and the [American Enterprise Institute](#); shaped by the expert advice of the scientists and public health officials on Maryland's Coronavirus Response Team; and tailored to our situation here in Maryland. The result is a responsible, gradual, safe path forward for our state and for the Maryland State Archives.

Guidelines for Staff Working in MSA Buildings

The following is the policy of the Maryland State Archives during the pendency of the pandemic.

Any staff working on site in either in Annapolis, at Rolling Run, or the Baltimore City Archives, are required to follow these guidelines regardless of the reopening phase in which we may find ourselves.

- A mask, or face-covering, must be worn at all times other than when staff are in their own individual workspace, provided that their workspace is not within twelve feet of another person or is enclosed.
- Staff should frequently wash hands with warm water and soap, for at least twenty seconds.
- Communal coffee pots or hot water pots are not to be used; it is recommended that staff bring in their own coffee/tea for individual use.
- Staff should utilize the cleaning supplies on hand to wipe off any surfaces within their own workspace; it is further recommended that staff open doors either wearing gloves or with a disinfectant wipe, in order to reduce contact in high-touch areas.
- If utilizing shared spaces or utilities (e.g., the kitchen/break room, refrigerator, and/or any microwave oven in the building), it is the staff responsibility to wipe down handles and surfaces used; there should be only one person in the kitchen/break room at a time. Staff are not to eat in these spaces or linger longer than it takes to, for example, wash hands, warm something in the microwave or use the vending machines.

Social Distancing Protocol

Employees should follow social distancing best practices while at any Archives facilities, including but not limited to workstations, common areas, collections storage areas and office spaces. Specifically, employees are asked to:

- Stay 6 feet away from others when working, on breaks or moving through the building. Where a minimum distance cannot be maintained, bring it to management's attention so that we can think through how to achieve distancing.
- Avoid contact with others whenever possible (e.g., handshakes).
- Avoid job tasks that require face-to-face work with others when possible.
- Avoid touching surfaces that may have been touched by others when possible.
- Avoid gathering when entering and exiting the facility. Employees should also only enter and exit through the front door unless you are specifically authorized to use the loading dock door.
- Follow any posted signage regarding COVID-19 social distancing practices.
- Disinfect their workspace often.
- Avoid touching their face.
- Avoid nonessential gatherings.
- Stagger lunches to limit the number of individuals in the break room or cafeteria. Only one person should be in the breakroom at any one time and you are responsible for cleaning up before you leave the space.
- Avoid using common areas.

Phase One

This was the stage we were in prior to June 8, 2020. At this time, our facilities remained closed to the public with a skeleton crew of staff at our two facilities who are there to:

- ensure our systems are up and running
- periodically check on our collections
- maintain and facilitate communication with our patrons and, more importantly, with key staff most all of whom are teleworking, and
- provide access to and copies of records needed by our patrons.

Employees who were able to work remotely did so and will continue doing so until further notice.

Social distancing protocols must be observed.

Nonessential travel is to be avoided and attempts are made to minimize the number of runs to Rolling Run and to the BCA.

We mention Phase One here because there is a possibility that we may have to return to this Phase if the situation commands.

Phase Two

Under Phase Two, our facilities will reopen to more employees. Access to the office will be granted for job roles that are essential to our operations or for employees who are not able to work remotely. Given the large size of our

facilities and with proper space planning and allocation, we will be able to maintain safe distances between employees throughout the workday. Some relocation of staff within Annapolis and temporary reassignment of some staff to Rolling Run may be necessary. Talk to your supervisor about your location and schedule.

Similar to Phase One, employees who are able to work from home should continue to do so.

Social distancing protocols will remain in place.

The following protocols will be put in place to ensure our headcount in the office does not exceed 50 employees and to promote social distancing efforts:

- **Staggered and monitored schedules**— Agency managers will implement a tracking system for employees to request and record their attendance in the office. Additionally, rotating schedules will be used until all restrictions are lifted to minimize employee contact.
- **Workstation modifications**— Management will modify the office layout to create at least 6 feet of distance between employee workstations, and ideally no closer than 12 feet. Face-to-face desk layouts will be changed. Where necessary staff may be relocated within Annapolis or to Rolling Run to achieve appropriate distancing.
- **Prohibition of in-person meetings**—Until all social distancing requirements are lifted, in-person meetings are strongly discouraged. Instead, employees should conduct virtual meetings. Employees who are in the office should avoid gathering in groups.

In addition to the protocols mentioned above, the Archives may implement additional guidance during Phase Two that is designed to promote workplace safety.

Nonessential travel is to be avoided and attempts should be made to minimize the number of runs to Rolling Run and to the BCA.

Phase Three

Under Phase Three, the office may reopen to all employees. We will consider reopening the office and implement various protocols to ensure the health and safety of our employees. During Phase Three, we may implement appointment-only in-person patron service. At this phase, we may also consider resuming business-related travel within the state.

Considerations

It's important to note that these phases are tentative and are subject to change based on state and local guidance, and the pandemic itself. Should an employee test positive for COVID-19 after the office reopens, our plan may change in an effort to protect our employees. In addition, if cases of COVID-19 spike again in our state or in our local area, we will consider whether to remain open or close.

We recognize that each individual will need to make a personal decision as to when he or she is comfortable returning to the office based on individual circumstances. Please reach out to your supervisor, manager or the Fair Practices Office to discuss your personal situation.

Workplace Protocols to Follow When Returning to Work

MSA has implemented various workplace protocols designed to preserve the health and safety of our employees as they return to work. This section further explains these protocols. For additional information, please see the COVID-19 Employee Guidance on Return to Work Procedures document which will be sent out later this week. You may also wish to reach out to your supervisor.

Screening, Exposure and Confirmed Illness Protocols

Keeping employees and the public safe is our priority. To help accomplish this, DGS and DBM have created various procedures for screening visitors and employees who return to work, dealing with exposure to COVID-19, responding to a confirmed case of COVID-19 and reporting transparency.

Employee Screening Protocols

MSA employees and visitors may be asked to confirm the status of their health upon entry into either of our facilities. MSA will look to DGS and DBM to implement appropriate screening protocols for symptoms, such as health screening interviews or temperature checks. When the Archives reopens, security personnel will be in place in our Annapolis facility to conduct these screenings.

Should an employee arrive either at Rolling Run or Annapolis at a time when no security is present to perform the protocol, the individual will be required to self-administer the screening.

Refusal by an employee to answer screening questions may result in the employee being placed on unauthorized leave without pay and may result in the imposition of disciplinary action. Visitors or contractors refusing to answer screening questions will be denied entry.

COVID-19 Exposure and Confirmed Illness Protocol

Employees or visitors who test positive for COVID-19 or believe they have been infected will be instructed to follow the advice of a qualified medical professional and self-isolate. When self-isolating, they should:

- Stay away from other people in their home as much as possible, staying in a separate room and using a separate bathroom if available.
- Not allow visitors.
- Wear a face mask if they have to be around people.
- Avoid sharing household items, including drinking cups, eating utensils, towels and bedding.
- Clean high-touch surfaces daily.
- Continue monitoring their symptoms, calling their health care provider if their condition worsens.

Notably, employees who are symptomatic or who have tested positive should not return to work until the conditions outlined in the COVID-19 Employee Guidance on Return to Work Procedures document are met.

When an employee tests positive for COVID-19, appropriate protocols as directed by DBM HR will be triggered. Furthermore, employees who have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be instructed to self-quarantine.

Reporting Transparency Protocol

Any MSA employee who experiences COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 must notify Administration as soon as practicable. The employee will be asked to assist with contact tracing. This information will be tracked separately from personnel records, and names will not be released. Depending on the circumstances, the Appointing Authority will notify impacted employees if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace.

In accordance with existing State policy, MSA Administration will coordinate with DGS to implement appropriate cleaning protocols and will confer with the Secretary of DBM for permission to close the building to staff and the public if warranted.

Employees should do their part to help keep the office as clean as possible by cleaning and disinfecting their workstations and surfaces they commonly use. Employees should also avoid using others' workstations, tools and equipment. Additionally, whenever an employee uses a common piece of equipment (e.g., printer or fax machine), it should be wiped down prior to and following use. Proper cleaning and disinfecting supplies will be provided by MSA to the extent they can be obtained. Employees should wash their hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds after cleaning or sanitizing a surface.

Office Procedures

In addition to the guidance outlined above, MSA has implemented the following workplace procedures to be followed until social distancing guidelines are lifted:

- **Deliveries**— Management will set up contactless drop zones for all deliveries, including mail and packages. An assigned contact or contacts will process mail and packages at least three times per week, utilizing gloves.
- **Visitors**—Until further notice, all nonessential visitors are prohibited and any interviews / meetings should be conducted virtually. For business-critical visits managers and staff must take steps to safeguard employees and visitors by:
 - Requiring visitors to go directly to their destination within the building without unnecessarily interacting with employees.
 - Requiring visitors to practice social distancing and good hygiene while on-site.
- **Vending Machines and Lunches**—To ensure the health of employees, MSA will observe governmental guidelines and restrictions related to self-serve vending stations. Employees will be responsible for bringing their own food and beverage, preferably in a temperature-controlled bag. It is recommended that all dishware be taken home nightly for cleaning in a dishwasher. Staff must also pack out their food related trash when they leave for the day.

The Archives may add to this list of workplace procedures as employees return to work. Employees should monitor workplace communications to ensure they're up to date on all health and safety communications.

Conclusion

The Archives looks forward to the future of all of our employees returning to work in our buildings. The COVID-19 pandemic has created uncertain times and resulted in unprecedented workplace changes. As communicated throughout this return to work action plan, we are prioritizing the health of our employees every step of the way as we consider reopening our doors.

We will execute on our plan cautiously, following applicable state and local guidance as much as possible. We also understand that each employee's needs and situations will be different as our doors begin to reopen. Employees should discuss any concerns they have about returning to work as it relates to their personal health or situation with their manager or supervisor.

Finally, I ask that employees be patient and understanding of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic may require our return to work plans to change. Employees will be given as much notice as possible in the event of an unforeseen setback or office closure.

Employees should direct questions regarding the content of this action plan to their supervisor. Furthermore, while the strategies highlighted in this document can protect workers from COVID-19, it's important to follow CDC guidance at all times. For more information, the CDC Guidance can be found [here](#).

As always, you can contact me directly with your concerns as well.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy D. Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Archivist and

Commissioner of Land Patents